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After exploring the ledges for a couple of hours, most of us were getting tired and ready for a good meal in a warm place. We found a good eatery in Garrettsville that was a perfect winter refuge.

We all agreed with Bill O'Brien, our food critic, that Garrettsville is a good base for outdoor exploration.

Canal Trek Proves Difficult

by
Dave Daams

We started our CVTC hike from Canal Fulton with high spirits and energy on the morning of February 17th. We were enjoying the canal and river views along the Towpath Trail. Birdcalls were heard and waterfowl were seen on the Tuscarawas River.

Gene Wimmer, the only one who possessed some common sense that day, was using his cross-country skis. The rest of us trudged through moderately deep snow without the aid of snowshoes.

After the first mile, Gene dropped down from the Towpath and skied on the frozen canal. The ice seemed thick enough to support hikers too, so two others and myself joined him. Walk on the ice, which had only an inch thick covering of snow, was much easier.

About fifteen minutes later, the inevitable happened. My left foot broke through a weak spot in the ice and my leg plunged more than knee-deep in the murky water. I quickly pulled my leg out, but not before some icy water got into my boot. This did not cause a problem for me right away, but it did later.

After a couple of more miles, most of our group was getting tired of the snow trek and decided to turn back. Gene and I pressed on. We went another two miles on the Towpath to the next road crossing and began returning on the Olde Muskingum Trail, a bike path that parallels the Towpath on the other side of the Tuscarawas River.

My energy was waning and I began to slow down. There was no evidence that anyone had used this trail since the snowstorm a few days earlier. After a while, Gene and I agreed that he would ski back to Canal Fulton and pick me up in his car at a trailhead about midway between our location and the town.

Soon after he skied out of view, I had to stop and get some rest. I removed my left boot and wrung the cold water out of my sock to keep my foot from getting frostbitten.

As it turned out, most of our group did not return on foot to Canal Fulton. Several others were picked up by Mike Wendelken at the same spot. Gene was the only one who completed the entire 10.4-mile trip. We were tired, worn out and a few were limping with sore muscles and aching joints.

Most of us went to a Thai restaurant in Canal Fulton to relax and refresh. After eating the delicious food, we felt considerably better. The Thai cuisine made the whole day worthwhile.

Work on the Pine Grove and Ledges by Bill O'Brien

The Pine Grove and Ledges area had a mix of almost spring and wintry conditions at the December through February sweeps.

The December Adopt-A-Trail sweep at the Ledges and Pine Grove Trails had eight volunteers, including myself. If I remember right, the weather was mild for this time of year and we were able to do a little tweaking on the trails, as ditches and culverts were running able to be cleaned.

We were able to observe the excellent work at the Ledges near Ice Box Cave as some drainage work was done by a couple of Girl Scouts earlier in the year. The Ledges has come along quite a bit since the sweeps began but I'm particularly happy with this project.

We did some other clearing and just checking of the trails and they were in pretty good shape.

In January we had a particularly mild day that was more like spring than in the middle of winter. The water was running good giving us the chance to take advantage of the situation. It seems as though the culverts on the Kendall Lake connector tend to plug up.

Most likely all of the debris stops at the inlet of the culverts making them easier to clean. Sometimes the inlets get buried so they can't be seen but the debris is mostly leaves and twigs giving us an opportunity to clean them quickly. We had seven volunteers that day.

February was the fun sweep that turned out to be a hike instead of much of a sweep. We had frozen conditions and lots of snow. I took my camera along instead of tools and observed the winter beauty as we took our time around the Ledges. Up on top we went by the shelter and took a different route than normal. I decided to only hike the Ledges area and leave the Pine Grove Trail and Forest Point for another day. They are fine trails themselves but the Ledges with all the ice and snow was the show for the day. We did well to see open ditches and culverts, let alone do any maintenance. We had good sun sometimes making for good contrast. My camera went on the blink but we had a good time hiking around anyway.

Since we didn't do the Pine Grove, some of us, Mike Brittain, Paul Wokoun and Steve Rays all went up to explore the Blue and Buttermilk Falls Trail. Again, the winter scenery was spectacular with frozen waterfalls and landscape. We spent quite a while walking down on the creek and checking things out.

Park and Trail News